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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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R 091210Z JUN 75
FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9055
INFO USIA WASHDC
AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 4225

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR GR US TU
SUBJ: VISIT TO RHODES AND SAMOS

1. THE AMBASSADOR, ACCOMPANIED BY THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND POLITICAL COUNSELORS, TRAVELLED TO RHODES FOR TWO DAYS LAST WEEK TO VISIT USG FACILITIES THERE AND CALL ON LOCAL OFFICIALS. ON THE WAY BACK TO ATHENS HE STOPPED FOR A SHORT VISIT ON SAMOS AND ALSO CALLED ON THE NOMARCH THERE.

2. BOTH THE NOMARCH OF THE DODECANESE AND THE MAJOR OF RHODES MADE A POINT OF PRAISING THE EXCELLENT RELATIONS WHICH EXIST BETWEEN VOICE OF AMERICA OFFICIALS BASED ON RHODES AND THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES. THE NOMARCH IN PARTICULAR SPOKE VERY WARMLY ABOUT VOA PROGRAM CENTER DIRECTOR CARROLL AND HIS POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO GOOD US-GREEK RELATIONS IN RHODES. THE U.S. COAST GUARD LORAN STATION IN RHODES ALSO SEEMED TO BE FUNCTIONING EFFECTIVELY WITH A FINE GROUP OF YOUNG COAST GUARD PERSONNEL.

3. THERE IS, OF COURSE, CONCERN AMONG GREEK OFFICIALS IN RHODES OVER THE DROP IN TOURISM LAST YEAR AS A RESULT OF
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THE CYPRUS CRISIS AND OVER PROSPECTS FOR TOURISM THIS

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YEAR. BOTH THE NOMARCH AND THE MAYOR REQUESTED THAT THE AMBASSADOR TO WHATEVER HE COULD TO ENCOURAGE AMERICAN TOURISTS TO COME TO RHODES. (THE AMBASSADOR WAS TOLD THAT RHODES HAS 20,000-30,000 TOURIST BEDS AND AS OF LAST WEEK THERE WERE ONLY ABOUT 10,000 TOURISTS ON THE ISLAND. OF THESE, IT WAS ESTIMATED THAT ABOUT 7,000 WERE SWEDES, 2,000 WERE GERMANS, AND THE REMAINING 1,000 INCLUDED DUTCH, BRITISH, CANADIANS AND ONLY 100-200 AMERICANS.)

4. THEY EMPHASIZED THAT DESPITE THE GENERAL GREEK FEELING OF DISAPPOINTMENT OVER AND CRITICISM OF U.S. POLICY CONCERNING CYPRUS AND SOME INCIDENTS EARLIER, THE PEOPLE OF THE DODECANESE WERE BASICALLY FRIENDLY TOWARDS AMERICANS. A FACTOR IN THIS RESPECT, THEY SAID, IS THAT A LARGE NUMBER OF EMIGRANTS HAVE GONE TO THE U.S. FROM THE DODECANESE. NEVERTHELESS, IN RESPONSE TO SOME PROBING BY THE AMBASSADOR IT WAS MADE CLEAR THAT IT WAS STILL TOO EARLY TO CONSIDER RESUMING SIXTH FLEET SHIP VISITS TO RHODES. WE SHOULD KEEP THE POSSIBILITY IN MIND, HOWEVER, AND MAYBE TAKE ANOTHER READING LATER THIS SUMMER OR IN THE FALL.

5. ALTHOUGH WE SAW A FEW NEWLY-CONSTRUCTED PILLBOXES AND SOME MINED AREA (CLEARLY MARKED) NEAR THE BEACHES SOUTH OF THE CITY OF RHODES, NEAR THE VOA TRANSMITTER SITE AT AFANDOU (ABOUT 30 KILOMETERS FROM THE CITY OF RHODES), VERY FEW GREEK SOLDIERS WERE IN EVIDENCE (THE VOA OFFICIALS MENTIONED THAT THERE WERE NORMALLY SOME TROOPS IN THIS AREA BUT THEY MAY HAVE BEEN TOLD TO KEEP OUT OF SIGHT IN VIEW OF THE AMBASSADOR'S VISIT.) NOR DID THE PILLBOXES APPEAR TO US TO BE A SERIOUS EFFORT THE WHOLE EXERCISE STRUCK US AS BEING PRIMARILY A PSYCHOLOGICAL ONE. ON THE BASIS OF WHAT WE SAW, THE REPORTED "MILITARIZATION" THAT HAS OCCURRED ON RHODES DID NOT APPEAR TO HAVE ANY OFFENSIVE CAPABILITY WHATSOEVER AND WE WONDER HOW EFFECTIVE IT WOULD BE EVEN DEFENSIVELY. ONE CERTAINLY DID NOT GET THE FEELING OF INTENSIVE MILITARY ACTIVITY.

6. THE SAME WAS TRUE ON SAMOS WHERE WE STOPPED FOR A FEW HOURS. WE SAW ONE PILLBOX UNDER CONSTRUCTION IN A CONFIDENTIAL

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FIELD SOME DISTANCE FROM A BEACH NEAR PYTHAGORION AND VERY FEW SOLDIERS. IN FACT, JUST AS WE ARRIVED AT THE PORT OF SAMOS A TURKISH BOAT PULLED IN FROM KUSADASI WITH 25-30 TOURISTS WHO HAD COME TO SPEND THE DAY ON SAMOS.

7. THE CHIEF OF THE GENDARMERIE TOLD US THAT BOAT SERVICE BETWEEN SAMOS AND KUSADASI HAD BEEN RESUMED AGAIN A FEW DAYS EARLIER. TWO GREEK AND TWO TURKISH FLAG BOATS

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WERE INVOLVED IN THIS TRAFFIC. MOST PASSENGERS WERE
FOREIGN TOURISTS BUT OCCASIONALLY GREEKS AND TURKS ALSO
CROSSED TO THE OTHER SIDE, HE INFORMED US.

8. ON BOTH ISLANDS THE AUTHORITIES DESCRIBED THE PEOPLE
AS RELATIVELY CALM AND RELAXED--AND SO THEY SEEMED TO US.
KUBISCH

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